III

THE ÆSTHETIC OF DANTE

IT will be best to begin with a definition, since the term æsthetic has now such general usage as to be complex in its significance. We shall be concerned with it as referring to the conscious expression of a conviction with regard to the nature of the process by which the beautiful is apprehended, as it appears in conjunction with an analysis of beauty.

Beauty is, I suppose, in general realized intuitionally—it is simply perceived or not perceived. Not all of us care to analyze the process of the perception of it, few are moved or even willing to investigate the results of an analysis with a view to constructing a canon of the beautiful or a rule for the production and the differentiation of its modes. When a question of judgment with regard to the quality of beauty is put forward, we resort commonly to an explanation, of little import as an explanation, to the effect that tastes vary, and that the answer to the question is, after all, a matter of taste. To be sure, it *is* a matter of taste. As the poet Shelley, in defending his art against the pessimistic attack of Peacock, says, " . . . there is a certain order or rhythm belonging to each of the . . . classes of mimetic representation, from which the hearer and the spectator receive an intenser and purer pleasure than from any other; the sense of an approximation to this order has been called taste by modern writers." In a word, taste is always a matter of cultivation, on the presumption that there is a high sort of

taste that constitutes a means of determining a gradation of values. The real import of the casual observation is that it shows the necessity of a canon or standard. Moreover, that irrational, rule-of-thumb solution of the matter of the pleasurable appeal of a work of art, which relies upon the subjective experience alone for the ascribing of beauty to that work, in its operation gives proof that a norm is required. I mean that when the judgments with respect to a poem, a painting, or a piece of music vary widely (or even slightly, for that matter), and the varying opinions are given with reference to a seemingly unexplainable effect upon the reader, observer, or hearer of the work, they are evidence that the true basis for right judgment lies in something other than the mere indefinite opinion of the observer; that Poe's views on Milton's "Paradise Lost," for instance, are not valid simply because in their application there is no assurance against the equal validity of opposite results. Tennyson gives the whole game away when he concedes that "Poetry is like shot silk with many glowing colours, and every reader must find his own interpretation according to his ability, and according to his sympathy with the poet," for he must then allow the opposite of that which he maintains in an early poem about the rough intruder who comes over the wall into the exclusive garden of the poet's mind. In a word, I think we should be convinced that there should be some means of ascertaining why one opinion of an artistic production is not considerable, why another should be recognized.

I must not be interpreted as implying that our aim should be to make objective every element concerned with beauty and the beautiful, that we must find a way of taking it apart and measuring all the parts and being quite satisfied with the tabulation of a set of qualities and quantities; for this,

the commonest, most obvious view of the nature of beauty, is most unsatisfactory. It smacks of foot-rules and acid tests, which at least do not rhyme well. But I would imply that there are certain qualities and quantities which are involved in that which is beautiful and which can be tabulated —such as symmetry, sweetness, order, and the like—and that the remaining subjective element, if there be one truly, is capable of such manipulation that it can at least be circumscribed. I shall be interested in having indicated, as well, that the objective elements derive their significance from the manner in which they are correlated with the other.

It may be that I am already exhausting you and myself with a sort of violent shadow boxing; but it is my impression that there is an opponent of considerable weight somewhere in the distance.

The entire difficulty is resolved, I think, if for the present we set over against one another two terms which, in the content we assign to each, will stand opposed, and together compass the entire field of discussion; these terms are emotional analysis and rational or intellectual analysis, and, of course, the consequent syntheses. And since we are primarily concerned with poetry as a beautiful expression of an impression of beauty, let us be content here to illustrate these terms by a consideration of two poets, Keats and Dante, as embodying them in their poetry, assuming, as I think may be shown, that they are applicable to the other arts. We shall leave out of consideration entirely that view which regards a pleasurable resultant sensation, of whatever sort it may be, as the only requirement of a work of art. In all considerable artists we find some attempt to express, in all considerable poets an attempt to utter, what they regard as the true merits, confines, and functions of their arts.

Keats' suavity, appealing to the ear and the mind as velvet or plush to the hand or a brocade of figured gold to the eye, is well instanced in his utterances on beauty, which also show forth what I would have understood as emotional analysis. In one of the most commonly quoted passages of his works, the inscription on the Grecian Urn, and the poet's observation with regard to it, he writes:

> "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"—that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

I notice the suavity of the expression, and the sweeping generality as most obvious and most agreeable. But the slightest further rationalization makes clear the characteristic mode of analysis of Keats. I ask for a delimitation of the concept of truth, and am confronted with a dilemma. If truth be nothing except "what is," then all is beautiful, and there is no place for the ugly. If it be in its essence the correspondence between an object and the perception of it, I have the most indefinite notion of beauty possible—that of a mere juxtaposition of a stimulus and an emotion. To be sure, if truth is to bear all of its interpretations, the lines are an adequate analysis. The poet speaks of "lily truth," the "very white of truth," in exactly the same manner as that in which he deals with beauty. I am incapable of integrating between two such variable points. True, in his letter to Bailey (November 22, 1817) he writes: "I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections, and the truth of Imagination. What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth,—whether it existed before or not,—for I have the same idea of all our passions as of Love: they are all, in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty." But here, too, there is at least a failure to objectify.

Either of the conclusions I have mentioned illustrates what I have called emotional analysis, which has the peculiar property of being a mere naming of a condition. This sort of observation is, as I have suggested, characteristic of this poet; for him beauty is "felt" as "keen," "intense," "strange," sometimes "staid," "ever increasing," eternal, with the function existing as it does in particular things with indefinite pleasurable associations, of generally soothing any irritation, supposedly either by making the irritation vague by a contribution of its own vagueness, by disseminating itself and thus becoming preponderant, or by some such means destroying its opposite.

Another well known passage illustrates this well:

> A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
> Its loveliness increases; it will never
> Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
> A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
> Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
> Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
> A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
> Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
> Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
> Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darken'd ways
> Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,
> Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
> From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
> Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
> For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
> With the green world they live in; and clear rills
> That for themselves a cooling covert make
> 'Gainst the hot season; the mid-forest brake,
> Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms:
> And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
> We have imagined for the mighty dead;
> All lovely tales that we have heard or read:

An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

Nor do we merely feel these essences
For one short hour; no, even as the trees
That whisper round a temple become soon
Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,
The passion poesy, glories infinite,
Haunt us till they become a cheering light
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast,
They always must be with us, or we die.

All the attributes here ascribed to beauty are referred to an immediate sensible perception; there seems to be no suggestion of the functioning of beauty through an intellectual appeal or medium. Thus, also, there is apparently no suggestion of a similar appeal in the poem beginning "I stood tiptoe upon a little hill," in which Keats deals with the inspirational element in nature. There is, moreover, a hiatus between the perception and its result. For there is obviously supposed to be a connection which does not appear; this relation of the essence of the power of fancy, of which Keats makes so much, and which has as its peculiar property that of joining two elements which have no apparent relation, or rather two elements of a series whose interstitial steps are omitted. This condition may suggest the sort of account common to mystical æsthetics, for which there is built a system of thought, with gaps in it, which are bridged with undemonstrable assumptions, in turn given the name of inspiration or revelation; or of that account in which there is assumed a metaphorical correspondence, which is built into a logically resultant system. I shall call attention to instances of this procedure. But I must here add that concomitant with it, as in Keats, there is also an inadequate

statement of the nature of the artistic process. Keats seems to have no definite rational expression of the nature of his own activity. Poetry-making is the result of "the passion poesy." Certainly there is nothing here comparable to the analysis, so incomprehensible to Byron as to be satirized by him, of Coleridge. But do not allow me to seem to malign Keats; before he died he had written that

> fancy cannot cheat so well
> As she is famed to do,

and had called the heavenly bodies

> symbols divine,
> Manifestations of that beauteous life
> Diffused unseen throughout eternal space.

I might point in passing to the inclusive utterance of Coleridge as showing a contrasting view. It is his opinion that "To admire on principle, is the only way to imitate without loss of originality." This holds particularly for the poet.

Since my chief point in contrasting Keats with Dante lies in the comparison of a pleasant vagueness with a pleasant incisiveness, it will be necessary to derive the æsthetic value of this precision. I shall recall the most remarkable features of æsthetic to and during the time of Dante.

In the thirteenth century there were current various ideas of æsthetic, more or less abstract, simple or complex; remarkable were those of the last sort, and it is these that are significant for us.

Investigation has shown, for instance, that a tradition of the Aristotelian differentiation of tragedy and comedy was maintained through the Middle Ages, though the treatise in which it was made is commonly supposed to have been unknown to scholars in that period, with the exception of a

very few, so few, perhaps, that the dissemination of the idea was not from the text. In any case, since the likelihood is not in the direction of the use of the text of the *Poetics,* the labor which would otherwise be unnecessary (and it is very considerable), that of identifying evidences of the tradition, is required. A part of this work has been done by Mr. J. P. McMahon, at Harvard University; but it would seem that something may still be done.

Most striking in the doctrine of the master of those who know is the attempt to represent the artistic process with relation both to the technique and to the function of the art; Aristotle would construct his formula in such a way that it may represent at the same time the relation of the poet to his poem, or of the painter to his picture, and of the poem to the hearer or the picture to the observer. The poem or picture is simply a bearer between artist and audience. The problems of the artist are therefore two. He must first appreciate the nature of that which is pleasurable, and then devise a method for the organization of a piece of work which will communicate the pleasurable effect. For that philosopher the pleasure in each case derives from the appreciation of the *æsthesis* or significant perception of the selective synthesis or method, on the part of the artist, and of the degree of aptitude with which the selection is synthetized, on the part of the audience. That is, the tragedian, for instance, will choose a series of incidents which will cohere in such a way that when arranged in their natural (*i.e.,* probable) order, they constitute an organism which by its probable nature immediately leads the attention of the observer along its own path in unquestioning sympathy, to such a degree that he has produced within him the emotion which would be produced were he to undergo the stress of action which is represented before him on the

stage. This phenomenon has had applied to it the term "generalizing power," and has given rise, even in Aristotle, to an emphasis upon the typical as the essential subject for artistic representation. We still invoke the consideration of types as one of the criteria in our own dramatic criticism, not always with a full appreciation of the ancient significance, and we shall see that a similar consideration bears weight in Dante's æsthetic.

But Aristotle called the phenomenon, the artistic process, imitation. Imitation, however, is not mere reproduction in whatever medium of a series of perceptions; a painter will not represent every minute detail from nature, but will select, though every detail is eligible for representation, only such elements as adequately represent the unity which he sees in the subject. It is a process of pruning away defects, which are simply the unnecessary elements—he performs what Aristotle calls a purgation; and the pleasurable result of the process on the person viewing the composition comes about from an unconscious, reflex purgation, the obverse of that of the artist. He is naturally imitative, in the ordinary sense of the word, and is therefore led, if the art is perfect, involuntarily to the predetermined emotion. The pleasure of the emotion arises from the freeing of the perceptions of conflicting emotions; the impression of beauty is derived from the contemplation of the purification or refining brought about. Every art and every artist proceeds in exactly the same manner, and is diversified by the medium—the canvas, the limitations of the stage, the adequacy of verbal or mimic (of the body) expression, or the instrument or substance employed.

The less complex forms of representation afford pastime pleasure; the more complex a noble enjoyment that is capable of repeated stimulation.

Now, it is the imagination which functions when the poet makes his selection, and the same faculty which operates when the reader considers the poem. It has the power of forming images from recollected perceptions or of receiving the images of present ones and of combining the elements to form an image. Thus the imagination would enable the spectator to conceive of the entire action of a play, and of the play as an organism, by retaining the events in their order as a complete image. Further, the faculty has some limited use of the activity of the intellect, though its limitation is indeterminate. (But it is likely that Aristotle would have allowed the imagination as realizing such combinations of perceptions as are natural and probable in that they are most common.) It deals, however, with the appearance of things as they are perceived by the senses. For Aristotle these are refined in the process of selection, or imitation. It may not be inapposite to note that the word imagination does not appear in the poetical works of Keats.

For Plato, though, the imitation does not involve the notion of selection or arrangement of conscious origin, but is a matter of reproducing by a sort of reflection. Now since the senses are notably unreliable, it is evident that man has not through them any means of deriving the type; the induction of the seed-concept, the essence or idea of anything will never be complete. Man has about him such a disparate arrangement of things that, though there is evidence of an order leading to unity, that unity cannot be realized in terms of them. The well known passage in the "Republic" about the construction of an ideal bed, invoked by Bosanquet in his "History of Æsthetics," is sufficient as a citation. There can be no truthful representation by means of art, then, and art is incapable of the moral import which it should have. Even a rational effort cannot complete such

a synthesis as is necessary for the adequate expression of the idea, the principle, or master element of the supernal artist. I should like to speculate upon the notion that the doctrine of Plato was issued as a defense against contemporary attack, and suggest that that difference between the Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines is not really to be so much emphasized. But it is sufficient to note that it is the Platonic doctrine as we have it that had the influence with which we are concerned.

The Neoplatonic conception may be suggested briefly, for the present purpose, in connection with the Platonic. So far as the artistic process is concerned, it is a matter of the artist preparing himself for the reception of the divine idea, unattainable by any intellectual effort, by freeing himself of all the checks of sense perception, in order that the divine concept may enter his mind, and waiting for its entrance. The reverse of this process, the expression of that which is instilled, is also limited, since the divinely pure element cannot be represented adequately in terms of sense perceptions. The qualities of the beautiful, in accordance with this state of affairs, must be determined by implication. The *one* must be beautiful, good, pure, bright, because these qualities seem to be indications of the best. And because they coexist in the one, they are the same, and the beautiful is good, pure, and luminous. I do not give further attention to the doctrine here, for it will appear again.

We must add to these three schools or tendencies current in large part in the Middle Ages that of Augustine. For Augustine the aim of endeavor seems to be quiescence, which is pleasant. The means of attaining this desired repose is apparently a fusion of the processes already indicated. Undoubtedly the book on the "Beautiful and the Fitting," which he reports that he destroyed, would have

contained such passages as the following: "To be, is no other than to be one. In as far, therefore, as anything attains unity, in so far it 'is.' For unity worketh congruity and harmony, whereby things are composite, in so far as they are: for things uncompounded are in themselves, because they are one; but things compounded, imitate unity by the harmony of their parts, and, so far as they attain to unity, they are. Wherefore order and rule secure being, disorder tends to not-being." These observations apply also to the existence of beauty. Thus, " . . . a body which consists of members, all of which are beautiful, is by far more beautiful than the several members individually are by whose well-ordered union the whole is completed, though these members also be severally beautiful." Again, "We shall, therefore, see Him according to the measure in which we be like Him; because now the measure in which we do not see Him is according to the measure of our likeness to Him." I need not stop to point out hints of Platonic, Aristotelian, and Neoplatonic elements. But it must be added that Augustine is remembered by such people as Albertus Magnus as having been of the opinion that one of the most essential determinants of beauty is color. I suppose we should note in his utterances a tendency to the objectifying of which I have spoken, so far as earthly beauty is concerned, and so far as essential beauty is concerned, a tendency toward the Platonic notion.

I must arrive at the most definite utterance on the beautiful known to the Middle Ages, and pass by some slighter ones. This is found in a short work ascribed to St. Thomas Aquinas (though it is perhaps by his teacher, Albertus), called "De Pulchro et Bono," or, "Of the Beautiful and the Good." The treatise consists of an excerpt from the work "On the Divine Names," assigned to Dionysius the

Areopagite by medieval scholars, together with an exposition of it, point by point, after the fashion of the medieval tractate proper. I shall attempt to summarize its doctrine as briefly as possible. To the Deity is assigned the quality of beauty. He is the One, the Perfect in every respect. From Him, in His quality as creator, come all the qualities with which we are conversant, which must, of course, have some intermediary bearers for the purpose of dissemination. These bearers are the heavenly bodies, in something like the order in which the spheres of the universe were thought to be arranged. Each has, however, the function of transmitting to the next lower the divine effluences, dividing them as they arrive at each amongst those next in order below themselves. There is thus an universal dissemination. Each object receives the disseminated power as its particular order and adaptability will allow, and ultimately earthly things take something of the divine quality, expressing it in such qualities as appear to men as sensible ones. Now beauty is, of course, one of these. In objects we perceive color, figure, arrangement of parts, symmetry, and the like. Similarly we perceive light transmitted from one heavenly body to another, and finally to us. Likewise, the quality of good, which proceeds from the same source and is lodged in particular things, is perceived by us. Since it proceeds from the same source, in which it is identified with it, the good is to be associated with the beautiful. So, in the same way that evil is simply an absence of good, the ugly is a negation of the beautiful. A deformed body is ugly because it does not contain that share of the emanation of beauty which it could have received if the arrangement of its parts were such as to be capable of receiving it. The arrangement of the parts is a sort of potential beauty, and in the treatise the proportionate, harmonic ordering of the

elements of any complex is pointed to as the principal consideration of mundane pulchritude. In addition to beauty and goodness, the Deity possesses the swiftest of motion. This, too, is transmitted; a beauty of motion is thus conceivable.

The human mind is aware of any one of these modes of beauty by means of the perceptions which enter it through the senses. It has, of course, the power of discretion, which operates in such a way that it discerns or distinguishes beauty from the lack of it; there is also an imaging faculty, which presents to the conscious mind the result of the selection. There is possible, within limitations, a selection of the imagings, so that there develops a higher and higher appreciation of beauty. Although the account is carried on in more or less figurative language, it will be observed that there are here present suggestions of an Aristotelian selection, and a Platonic or rather Neoplatonic hierarchy of subjects for selection, with an intermingling of Augustinian attention to color.

There is one other notion, that of the differentiation of the beautiful and the becoming or decorous, which is set down as the contribution of Cicero to æsthetic. It will be found best expressed in the following passage from the treatise, in which are suggested the elements to which I have alluded, together with a further differentiation of grace from beauty and the becoming or fitting.

. . . the beautiful includes many things in its modes: there is obvious the splendor of substantial or actual form upon proportioned and limited parts of matter, as a body is called beautiful on account of the resplendence of color upon proportioned members: this is a sort of specific difference satisfying the mode of the beautiful. A second is that it draws desire to itself, and this power it has in so far as it is a good and an end. A third is that it gathers all things together, and this it has from the part of its form whose resplendence makes it beau-

tiful. Therefore so far as the first is concerned, the mode of the beautiful is distinguished from that of the becoming and the good; however, with respect to the second, they are not distinguished in any way, because that approaches the beautiful according as it is the same subject in which the good is; but with regard to the third, there is a certain fitness in the matter of the subject, because it approaches both the beautiful and the good as it is of the form of either. For all cognition has reference to form, which is the determinant of the multiplicity of the powers of matter; but it differs in mode, because as form is the end of matter, so the good assumes the mode of uniting. But as it is resplendent upon the parts of matter, so the beautiful has the mode of uniting (or assembling). So we therefore say that the beautiful and the becoming are the same in subject; but they are different in mode, for the mode of the beautiful in general consists in a resplendence of form upon proportioned parts of matter, or upon divers men or actions; but the mode of the becoming consists in this, that it draws desire to itself; grace (*decus*), however, is spoken of as proportion of power to the act.

I should remark, perhaps, that the only suggestion of the artistic process is in the words "all cognition has reference to form, which is the determinant of the multiplicity of the powers of matter, so the good receives the mode of uniting. But as it is resplendent upon the parts of matter, so the beautiful has the mode of uniting." I should judge, on noting the Aristotelian language and allusion, that the imaginative faculty is in question, and that it functions, as I have suggested, by joining perceptions. It is essential to note that it reproduces the form or "determinant of the multiplicity of the powers of matter," that is, that no artistic ordering is presented through its own power of ordering. The selective process which is the property of the artist for Aristotle seems here to be taken care of by the Supreme Being, and the poet, we would presume, becomes but another bearer of the divine effluence.

Assuming that I have sufficiently indicated the progress

of the precision of analysis of the æsthetic activity, which I set out to derive, I may, therefore, proceed immediately to point out the incisiveness of Dante's analysis with reference to what has been said.

There is in the poet's works a marked prominence given to the idea of division, in the use of the word or of words signifying the act. *To discern* means to Dante to make a definite differentiation of parts at natural points of division. There are indications that division is the first step of the process of the artistic method. Throughout the "Vita Nuova," the poems are divided for the avowed purpose of facilitating the understanding of them. There is, incidentally, a passage in a work of Hugo of St. Victor undoubtedly known to the poet, which ascribes to division the same value. Of course, mere division does not offer the highest degree of interpretation; it is simply the basis for it. The next natural step is one toward combination of the things separated. It is worth while bearing in mind this process of division in interpreting lines 8–9 of the first of the "Inferno," " . . . to treat of the good which I found there, I shall tell of the other things which there I saw." There is here a conception of the suggestion of one thing by its opposite, which occurs in a number of medieval writings, with the presupposition that they are differentiated. Essentially, the division takes place at the same time as does the composition. Thus, "The fairest branch that springs from the root of reason is discernment. For, as Thomas says, . . . To know the coördination of one thing with another is a special act of the reason, and this is discernment.' One of the fairest and sweetest fruits of this branch is the reverence which the lesser owes to the greater. Whence Tully, . . . , speaking of the beauty which shines in the face of rectitude, says that reverence is a part of this beauty."

The discernment of coördination, though, which is the result of the activity of the reason, is not final. There are special agents which lead the mind to a further realization of the organization: the one making possible a limited appreciation of organization by the intellect, the other seeming to represent it completely. Thus Dante writes, " . . . I say that our intellect for lack of that virtue by which it draws to itself that which it perceives [I mean an organic virtue, namely, the fancy] cannot rise to certain things because the fancy cannot help it, as it has not wherewithal. Such, for example, are substances separate from matter, which, although we may to some extent speculate about them, we cannot understand perfectly. And for this man is not to be blamed, for he was not the author of this defect; rather was it universal nature that so ordained, that is God, who willed to deprive us of this light during this present life; and why He so ordained it would be presumptuous for us to discuss. So that if my speculation carried me away to a region where the imagination lagged behind the intellect, though I cannot understand I am not therefore to be blamed. Furthermore, a limit is set to our ability in all its operations not by ourselves but by universal nature, and therefore we must know that the bounds of our capacity give wider range for speech than for the language. Therefore, if our thought, not only such thought as does not arrive at perfect understanding, but even that which culminates in perfect understanding, is too strong for words, we are not to blame, since we are not the authors of this defect." Certainly this passage illuminates that at the beginning of the "Paradiso," in which the reader who has not understood so far is warned to leave off, for he surely will be unable to understand beyond that point; and, again, explains those several observations scattered through the last cantos of the "Paradiso," in which

the poet confesses himself unable to represent the fulness of his vision in words. The secondary agent of the organizing function is the imagination. Of his state at beholding the Virgin he says, "I saw there smile upon their sporting and upon their chanting a beauty such that there was joy among the other Saints. And though I had wealth of speech even as of imagining I should not hazard to show the least part of their delight." Here, too, the other faculty fails; but it is to be expected that the failure of speech would occur in either case. There is not lacking, however, the ability to address to the intellect the organization of earthly beauty. The imagination is able to perceive even an abstraction of beauty. "Men say that a thing is beautiful when its parts correspond as they ought, because pleasure results from their harmony. Hence a man appears beautiful when his limbs correspond to one another as they ought; and we say that a song is beautiful when its words correspond to one another according to the requirements." Here is beauty as the harmonious congruence of parts. Here that of the apt, suitable, becoming: " . . . we should not describe an ox with trappings or a swine with a belt as adorned, nay rather we laugh at them as disfigured; for adornment is the addition of some suitable thing."

Here is a case in which beauty is not the same as goodness, but even so one of the sort just mentioned. In the discussion of a beautiful canzone, whose reading may not reach every reader, he says, "I say in the present instance that the goodness and beauty of every discourse are separate and diverse from one another, for goodness resides in the meaning and beauty in the adornment of the language, and both one and the other are attended with delight, although goodness be in the highest degree delightful. Wherefore, inasmuch as the goodness of this Canzone was difficult to apprehend on

account of the diversity of persons who are introduced in it as speakers, so that many distinctions are needed, while its beauty was easily seen, this Canzone seemed to require that for people generally, attention should be fixed on its beauty rather than its goodness."

But beauty and goodness are to be related finally: " . . . Morality is the beauty of philosophy, for as the beauty of the body follows from the proper disposition of the members, so the beauty of wisdom which is the body of philosophy, . . . , follows from the disposition of the moral virtues which enable her to give pleasure perceptibly to the senses." Furthermore, " . . . the beauty of the soul consists of manners, that is to say, in the virtues most of all, which sometimes through vanity or pride are rendered less beautiful and less pleasing."

The æsthetic process for Dante, then, consists of the appreciation of what is beautiful, of whatever sort it may be, through the agency of the imagination. Art must consist of an expression of an impression; and with regard to this the recurrence of the well known figure of the stamp and the wax is evidence of an Aristotelian tradition. There are three matters for concern in consideration of art, which are suggested by the poet thus: "Be it known then that like as art exists in three grades—in the mind of the artificer, in the instrument, and in the material informed by art—so too we may regard nature in three grades. For nature is in the mind of the first mover, which is God, and further in the heaven as the instrument by means of which the likeness of the eternal excellence is spread over fluctuating matter. And as when the artificer is perfect and the instrument is in perfect order, any flaw that may occur in the form of art must be imputed to the material alone, so, since God realizes the supreme perfection, and his instrument, the

heaven, falls no way short of its due perfection—it remains that whatsoever flaw there is in things below is a flaw on the part of the material submitted to the action of God and the heaven, and is beside the intention both of God as the active principle of nature, and of the heaven; and whatsoever good there is in things below, since it cannot come from the matter itself, which only exists as potentiality, must come from the artificer, God, and secondarily from heaven, which is the instrument of that divine art which men call nature."

The poet will look about him, allow his imaginative faculty to work, and reproduce what close approximation he can of the artistic order which he derives. The practice becomes habitual, and, as a result, the definition of art which Aristotle formulates is here valid, to the effect that it is a habit of production in conscious accord with the correct method.

An instance of the poet's practice may illustrate better. He writes that "in works of art, that is noblest which embraces the whole art. Since, therefore, poems are works of art, and the whole of the art is embraced in canzoni alone, canzoni are the noblest poems, and so their form is the noblest of any." "The whole art, therefore, of the canzone appears to depend on three things: first, on the division of the musical setting; second, on the arrangement of the parts; third, on the number of the lines and syllables. . . ." There is a particular form of this sort of poem that shows the following of a peculiar "habit"; it is in the canzone regarded as a tractate. A number of Dante's canzoni are referred to by this name, and these, with a few others, exhibit characteristics fairly determinate. It is noted by Toynbee that this sort of poem has a proem, a body, and a conclusion; that the body of the poem is made up of a narrative, and is sometimes referred to as the narrative por-

tion, or of some expository treatment. It seems, further, that this body of the poem has in several cases a special significance so far as the form is concerned. There is in a work of Hugo of St. Victor a definition of the tractate that has so far, apparently, been missed by commentators, according to which this form of writing is a "multiple exposition of a single thing." Now it is obvious that many of the songs consist of just this; moreover, the poet hints that this is so. It is true in the case of the poem which appears at the beginning of the second tractate of the "Convivio." Some such notion as is given in Hugo's definition appears to be at the bottom of the application of the term to the canzone; it is also applied, seemingly in this meaning, to the "Vita Nuova" and the "Comedy." There is, then, in such a phenomenon evidence of a close study of poetic forms and their suitable use, and a decided acumen in the poet's adaptation of them.

Dante has been shown to have been to some degree an astronomer; it will appear that he was a philosopher and economist as well as literary artist. I cannot overemphasize the opinion that in the light of his works, in that of their content and the evidence of the most pronounced concern of the poet with regard to their purposive construction, which is intended to lead to a noble enjoyment on the part of the reader, his æsthetic is noteworthy and significant; and that in the same manner and to the same degree that Spenser is the poet's poet, he may be called the philosopher's and the artist's poet.

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